

AUSTRIAN INFORMATION

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Christmas in Austria (Innsbruck, Tyrol)

MERRY CHRISTMAS

and a

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



With this issue, AUSTRIAN INFORMATION completes its seventh year of publication. Although this is not sufficient cause for celebrating a jubilee, it is nevertheless customary to look back and take stock of what has been accomplished in the year that is drawing to a close. AUSTRIAN INFORMATION, which seven years ago first appeared as a mimeographed sheet, has this year introduced an important new feature in addition to its varied and comprehensive news coverage of Austria — special illustrated supplements to acquaint American readers with distinctly and characteristically Austrian subjects. We hope that these supplements will enhance your interest in our publi-

cation and today, in honor of the Christmas season, AUSTRIAN INFORMATION is devoting its special supplement to Austrian folklore. *The Editor.*

AUSTRIAN FOLKLORE

SUPPLEMENT ON CUSTOM AND TRADITION, Page 4

TEN PERCENT TAX REDUCTION DECREED IN AUSTRIA, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 1955. The competent committees of Parliament have unanimously approved a number of Government proposals providing for the reduction of income taxes in Austria by an additional 10%, on the average, as of January 1, 1955. On January 1, 1954, taxes in Austria were reduced for the first time by approximately 10%. The results of this tax cut were so favorable from a fiscal point of view that it was decided to make a further reduction. The volume of production, savings deposits, investments and even tax receipts increased so substantially as a result of the first tax cut that the new step seemed justified. It is assumed that Parliament will enact the Government's proposals into law, so that the new tax relief can go into effect on January 1, 1955. Whereas the first measure in 1954 provided for an across-the-board cut in taxes, the new reduction is on a sliding basis according to income. Taxes on lower incomes will be reduced more than 10 percent, those on higher incomes less. At the same time, there will be an increase in allowance payments for children in order to give compensatory relief to families with many children. Allowances of 105 schillings each will be paid for the first and second child, 150 schillings each for the third and fourth and 200 each for every successive one.

FEDERATION OF AUSTRIANS LIVING ABROAD TO ESTABLISH COORDINATION CENTER IN VIENNA. The first general assembly of the World Federation of Austrians Living Abroad was held in Vienna this December, with 66 delegates from 33 organizations attending. At the present time, approximately 450,000 Austrians who still maintain the citizenship of the land of their birth are living in all parts of the world. The Federation has set itself the goal of representing the interests of these Austrians and of attending to their cultural needs. The organization's immediate aim is to clarify the question of dual citizenship and to study the possibility of voting rights for these 450,000 Austrians who live abroad. Special praise was voiced at the meeting for the work being done by these in behalf of Austria in the countries where they are living by furthering the ties between their adopted and native country. The most important event of the meeting was the announcement by Foreign Minister Figl that, by the terms of a Government decision adopted in December 1953 a coordination center is to be set up in Vienna for Austrians living abroad. The task of organizing this center has been assigned to Legation Counselor Franz Leitner. The center will function as a parallel organization to the World Federation, the administrative headquarters of which are located in Switzerland.

SOVIETS DO NOT PERMIT AUSTRIA TO HAVE RESCUE PLANES. The request submitted by the Austrian Ministry of Transportation and Nationalized Industries to the Allied Council for permission to purchase rescue planes, for use mainly in the mountains and areas affected by snowslides, has been vetoed by the Soviet representative. The Western High Commissioners called upon their Soviet colleague to consent at least to the purchase of 5 helicopters and five other planes, but the Russian representative declared that such authorization would contravene Allied regulations relative to the demilitarization of Austria. He declared that

in cases of emergency the Occupation Powers themselves could make the necessary rescue planes available.

NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN LAST YEAR. Austria's high level of employment continued to maintain itself during November. The number of unemployed increased by 21,907, primarily as a result of the winter weather which affected the building and tourist trades. Compared with November 1953, however, when the unemployment figure rose by 33,360, this year's increase is one-third less.

CHANCELLOR ADENAUER STRESSES GERMAN RECOGNITION OF AUSTRIAN INDEPENDENCE. The German Federal Chancellery in Bonn has issued the following statement: "In a decision of the Federal Administrative Court dated October 30, 1954, it was ruled that two Austrians who have been residing in Germany continuously since the end of the war still hold the German citizenship which was awarded them in 1938. Thus far the Federal Government has received no motivation in writing to support this decision. In order to allay the concern which has developed in Austria as a result of the decision and to bridge the period until the Federal Government adopts a final official position, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer has firmly stated in an interview with the Vienna newspaper "Neues Oesterreich" that the decision in question will have no influence on the attitude of the Federal Government in the matter of Anschluss. The Federal Government recognizes the independence and autonomy of Austria; it considers the annexation of Austria null and void. After the written arguments in support of the decision in question have been received, the Federal Government will study what measures — including legislative ones, if necessary — are required to clarify the legal situation beyond all possible doubt in conformity with this position."

On December 7, Austrian Foreign Minister Leopold Figl made a detailed report to the Cabinet relative to the question of citizenship in connection with Austrians living in Germany. The Cabinet approved the following official Austrian statement on the subject: "The Austrian Federal Government will deal at its next session with the statement of the German Federal Administrative Court, dated October 30, 1954. Austria believes that it can be deduced from the German statement that the German Federal Government, adopting the position expressed in the Moscow Declaration on Austria of October 30, 1943, likewise regards the so-called Anschluss as null and void and is prepared to incorporate this fact of international law in German legislation by means of a declaratory act. In the Austrian view, it is not necessary to await receipt of the said decision in writing before settling this matter of internal German legislation. This decision is now in force and therefore requires enactment of the legislative settlement which Austria expects and which has now been announced by the German Federal Government."

AUSTRIA HOST TO WORLD CONGRESSES. During the coming year, Austria will play host to distinguished congresses and conventions. For example, the world Medical Association will hold its annual congress in Vienna from September 14-15, 1955 and the World Society of International Aeronautical Experts will meet in Graz or Vienna in July or August, 1956.

CULTURE AND SCIENCE

EDUCATION MINISTER OPENS AUSTRIAN CULTURAL CENTER IN PARIS. The "Centre Culturel Autrichien," the Austrian Cultural Institute in Paris, was opened recently at a ceremony attended by numerous French and Austrian dignitaries. Addresses were delivered by Alois Vollgruber, Austrian Ambassador to France, Dr. Cocron, director of the Centre, Andre Bettencourt, Undersecretary in the Office of the French Prime Minister, and Dr. Drimmel, Austrian Minister of Education. In his speech Dr. Drimmel emphasized the spiritual ties between the people of France and Austria and then declared the Centre officially open. The Barylli Quartet played at the function, concluding their program with Schubert's Allegro Vivace. Those public officials attending the ceremony among them former Prime Minister Robert Schuman — were deeply impressed.

Following the opening, the Centre offered a concert by the Barylli quartet which drew enthusiastic acclaim. The Institute's November program includes a lecture by Dr. Felix Braun on "The Concept of Love in Austrian Literature," a lecture with slides by Dr. Josef Stummvoll on the "History and Riches of the Austrian National Library" and a lecture by Director Buschbeck on "Austrian Baroque Art." In December there will be two lectures on medicine by Professor Hallhuber of Innsbruck University, to be followed by a concert by the pianist Joerg Demus.

AUSTRIAN SUMMER SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE SESSIONS. The Anderl Rogge Language Institute in Graz will hold regular courses throughout the summer of 1955. Courses in the German language and in Germanistics will be offered at the Second Summer Course in Salzburg, from July 4 to August 13. The Mozarteum Music Academy will conduct courses between July 21 and August 31. The University of Innsbruck's Mayrhofen courses will be as follows: June 21 — July 11, July 12 — August 1, August 2 — 22, August 23 — September 12. Bad Ischl will offer courses in Economics from September 4-11. This is the 19th anniversary of the Bad Ischl Seminars.

AUSTRIAN MINT ISSUES SOUSA MEDAL; AUSTRIAN-BORN AUTHOR WRITES SOUSA BIOGRAPHY. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the visit of John Philip Sousa and his American band to Vienna in 1905, the Austrian Mint recently issued a special Sousa Medal. The issuance of the medal comes simultaneously with the hundredth anniversary of American March King's birth. At a recent Sousa memorial concert held in the auditorium of the Port Washington Junior High School in Long Island, Dr. James A. Hall, Superintendent of the Port Washington Schools, presented the Austrian Mint's Sousa Medal to Dr. Edwin F. Goldman, the guest conductor of the program. In awarding the medal, Dr. Hall recalled that when Sousa came to Vienna in 1905, that city was then the world's music capital, where Johan Strauss was writing his waltzes. The Viennese accorded Sousa an enthusiastic welcome at the time, lining the streets by the thousands as his band marched by. One of the spectators was a young artist named Arnold Hartig, who drew several sketches of Sousa. Hartig, who is

now 76 years old, is the artist who designed the medal issued by the Austrian Mint. Present in the auditorium at the Sousa Memorial concert were his two daughters, several members of Sousa's band and Sousa's biographer, Ann M. Lingg. A native of Austria, Ann M. Lingg is the author of the first biography of Sousa, which was published in the United States in November.

AUSTRIAN FOUNDS GERMAN THEATER IN MONTREAL.

Rudolf M. Stoiber, an Austrian living in Montreal, has established a German-language theater in that city called the "Deutsche Kammerspiele Montreal." The theater's first season will open on January 19 with a performance of Axel von Ambesser's comedy "Wie fuehre ich eine Ehe?" (How Shall I Conduct a Marriage?). During each season, it is planned to put on from four to six productions, each of them with two to four performances. In addition to these dramatic presentations, there will also be chamber music concerts, readings by poets and studio performances of experimental plays. This series will open with a performance of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Der Tor und der Tod" (The Fool and Death) with chamber-music accompaniment. The well-known John Newmark Trio will perform the musical part of the program.

The theater has set up a list of sponsors in which private individuals and institutions can be entered after making a single donation. They will then be recorded as formal sponsors of the theater.

VON EINEM WORKS TO BE PERFORMED IN PITTSBURGH AND CHICAGO. Gottfried von Einem's "Concerto for Orchestra" is scheduled for performance in Pittsburgh under the direction of William Steinberg at the beginning of next year. Shortly thereafter, Fritz Reiner is to conduct his "Turandot: Four Episodes for Orchestra" in Chicago.

ERNST KRENEK ON HIS OPERA "KARL V." Austrian composer Ernst Krenek, who is at present a resident of the United States, visited Vienna recently as a guest of the music publishers, "Universal Edition," and delivered a lecture on his opera "Karl V." Declaring that after hearing recordings of this work as performed at the Vienna International Musical Festival of 1951, he realized that its proportions were too great for the ordinary operatic scheme, the composer reported that he is now engaged in rewriting and readapting the opera. He will cut some of the scenes, although there is to be no shortening of the "Emperor's Confession". Krenek said he hopes in this way the work will have a greater public appeal.

BURGTHEATER PROGRAM INCLUDES SIX PREMIERES.

The Vienna Burgtheater has scheduled productions of six previously unperformed plays this season. To date, the following works have been selected for presentation: Harald Zusanek's "Jean von der Tonne," dealing with an episode of the French Revolution; Franz Fuehringer's "Antonio Meulener," which touches upon the problem of atomic research; Hans Buxbaum's "Hermann und Phaedra"; Franz Theodor Csokor's "Caesar's Witwe" (Caesar's Widow) and Hans Schubert's "Die hungrigen Goetter" (The Hungry Gods). Charles Morgan's play "The Burning Glass" will be given its first Austrian performance by the Burgtheater in 1955.

AUSTRIAN FOLKLORE—CUSTOM AND TRADITION

AUSTRIAN FOLKLORE. Austria is rich in local customs and festivals. The seclusion of its Alpine valleys, which compelled the inhabitants — mainly peasants, cattle farmers and woodsmen — to create their own entertainment and diversions and which, even in early periods, encouraged superstition, has resulted in the development of a great number of folk customs of all kinds. And then, too, in the plains as in cities, Austrian customs have been enriched by the close contact of the people with the inhabitants of surrounding countries. As a result, we still find hundreds of interesting customs all over Austria — in the cities and the country, in the mountains and the valleys — which in many cases go back to a period when Christianity had not yet penetrated into Central Europe and the old heathen practices constituted religion for the people. As Christianity advanced, these earlier religious practices were transformed and patterned after Church festivals. This is why the important Church holidays are still accompanied all over Austria by various ancient traditions which are no longer to be found in any other European countries but which are now followed in a Christian sense. Hand in hand with the popular customs go folksongs and folk poetry. At the present time there are many organizations and even Government departments in Austria which devote themselves to the conservation and promotion of the old popular customs. These ancient practices are always a unique experience for foreigners, and students of folk ways from all over the world are attracted by the diversity of Austrian folklore. It is the purpose of AUSTRIAN INFORMATION in the present issue to give its American readers a brief picture of the various popular customs practiced in Austria.

"SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT" BORN IN AUSTRIAN VILLAGE OF OBERNDORF. A survey of Austrian folk customs must begin with an account of the origin of the song which captured the hearts of all people within a few years and which today is one of the most internationally sung pieces of music: the Christmas carol "Silent Night, Holy Night." Although there is scarcely anyone who is not familiar with this work, many people are unaware that both text and melody originated in Austria. On December 24, 1818, Josef Mohr, custodian of the little church of St. Nicola in the village of Oberndorf, near Salzburg, handed the church's assistant organist Franz Gruber a simple little poem entitled "Silent Night, Holy Night." Within a few hours Gruber composed the melody to this song. Since the church organ was out of order on Christmas day, of all times, the composition was heard for the first time as a duet sung by Gruber and Mohr with guitar accompaniment on the eve of December 24, 1818.

Within a very few years, "Silent Night, Holy Night" became a Christmas carol for Christians throughout the world. Every year an international commemoration service is held in Oberndorf in honor of the two authors of the song. Children from many countries light candles beneath the portraits of Gruber and Mohr and, in many languages, they sing "Silent Night, Holy Night".

CHRISTMAS: AUSTRIA'S MOST IMPORTANT HOLIDAY. As in many other countries, Christmas is the most important holiday of the year in Austria. It is celebrated on Christmas Eve. The popular custom is for the Christmas tree, usually of fir or pine, to be kept in a locked room, decorated by the parents with candies wrapped in brightly colored paper, with Christmas cookies, all kinds of ornaments, gold and silver garlands and a large number of candles. The children are not admitted to the room where the tree is hidden until Christmas Eve, when the candles on the tree have been lit. The presents are spread out beneath the tree, but the center of attraction is a Manger scene of the Blessed Parents with the child Jesus. Nearly every family in the country owns hand-carved Manger figures, often hundreds of years old and handed down from generation to generation, which are placed beneath the Christmas tree every year. Then it is the custom for the family, standing in front of the tree, to sing Christmas



Stained Window in the Church of Oberndorf
Commemorating Josef Mohr, Author of "Silent Night"

songs, usually "Silent Night, Holy Night," "O Tannenbaum" and many other peasant or classical Christmas carols. Only after this are the children allowed to examine their presents. Then comes a Christmas supper, usually consisting of fish and a variety of Christmas pastries.

At midnight, Christmas matins are celebrated in all Austrian churches and in the country the peasants usually hold torches in their hands as they come down from the mountains to attend services in the valley. Christmas carols are sung in the church towers to guide the faithful on their way during the night. The long torchlight processions moving down from the mountains to the villages contribute much to the romantic atmosphere of the evening.

One old tradition still preserved in rural areas is that of "Showing the Christ Child." A sacristan and two altar boys carry a Manger from house to house, singing Christmas carols along the way. They are followed by so-called pastoral singers, i.e. children dressed as shepherds and angels who are invited into the houses to act out pastoral episodes, for which they are rewarded with Christmas cookies and candies.

Very widespread at Christmas time are the nativity plays and mystery pageants dealing with the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, the birth of Christ, the pilgrimage of the shepherds and the Three Kings. Many of these plays are performed in dialect and project the story of Christ's birth into an Alpine environment.

There is no Santa Claus in Austria. Christmas presents are attributed to the Christ Child, who is represented as a baby with angel's wings and who is really a symbol for the new-born Jesus Christ. The Christ Child comes from Heaven and is accompanied by angels who help him decorate the Christmas tree and distribute the gifts.

December 25 and 26 are considered to be the two most important holidays of the year. On these days members of families and close friends visit each other and enjoy large dinner, usually of roast pork, ham and all kinds of cake and cookies.

The Santa Claus known in America does appear in Austria in another form, however. On December 6, St. Nicholas' Day is celebrated in Austria, a custom which has been shown to go back to the 11th century, when the people began to honor Bishop Nicholas as the patron saint of Children. St. Nicholas makes his appearance accompanied by the devil. The children must give both of them information about their good and bad deeds. The devil prepares to hit them with a rod or to carry them off to Hell in a tub. Then St. Nicholas, dressed as a bishop, chases the devil away, gets the children to promise that they will be good from now on and gives them lots of nuts, fruit and candy. The custom of celebrating St. Nicholas' day (which the people call "Santeklausen") is very widespread in Austria and is an established element of the country's tradition.

THE NEW YEAR IS RUNG IN WITH FANFARES. The holiday after Christmas is New Year's, which is celebrated by the Austrian people with both merriment and solemnity. On the evening of December 31, it is customary for a few families and friends to get together for a party, with plenty of good



Star Singing, an Austrian Tradition Observed on the Eve of Epiphany (January 6)

food and drink, at which they wait for the clocks to strike midnight. At midnight all the church bells start to ring and in many areas trumpet and trombone players assemble on the balconies of church towers and announce the New Year with their fanfares. The moment is also one of reconciliation and it is customary for everyone to exchange kisses, in this way giving expression to their feelings of good will toward men. Everyone exchanges New Year's wishes for good health, an abundant harvest and success. In the cities, people usually dance all night. In the villages, children go from house to house on New Year's morning singing New Year's songs and offering their good wishes. The morning is always celebrated by a church Mass. A widespread custom is that of pouring lead: liquid lead is spilled in water where it immediately becomes hard and forms certain figures. From these figures an amusing interpretation is made of the person who poured the lead.

New Year's Eve is called "Silvester" in Austria. Opera houses, theaters and movie houses have special Silvester programs and it is customary for the Vienna State Opera to present a performance of Johann Strauss' "Die Fledermaus" with a cast of well-known singers. The usual symbols of Silvester are figurines of chimney sweeps, little pigs, horse-

shoes and four-leaf clovers, all of which are supposed to bring luck during the coming year. The two most characteristic Silvester dishes are roast suckling pig and "Faschingskrapfen" (jelly doughnuts).

EPIPHANY. Epiphany, which is celebrated in Austria on January 6, honors the Three Kings who came to Bethlehem to see the infant Jesus and bring him gifts. In many regions of the country, houses and barns are sprinkled with incense and holy water on the eve of Epiphany. The letters "K", "M" and "B" (which stand for Casper, Melchior and Balthasar, the names of the Three Kings) and the date are written on front doors with hallowed chalk to bring blessings on the home. The Christmas tree is lit for the last time and then burned. Another tradition of Epiphany Eve is that of "Star Singing." After the last Mass in church in the late afternoon, the "Star Singers" go from house to house, led by torch and lantern bearers. They are followed by a "Star Carrier" clad in a long white garment and carrying a shining star mounted on a long pole. The "Star Carrier" is followed by the Three Kings, usually with their faces painted white, black and red to symbolize the major human races. The entire procession is accompanied by the singing of carols glorifying the Holy Manger and the Three Kings.

"PERCHTENLAUF" AND "PERCHTENTANZ" SCARE THE WINTER AWAY. One of the oldest customs in Austria is the so-called "Perchtenlauf" and "Perchtentanz," usually held on Epiphany but in some areas at a later date. The "Perchten" are old masks, handed down from generation to generation, almost always of witches and forbidding animals. Wearing these masks, the people run about the village, usually beating drums, ringing bells and making all kinds of other noise, for the idea of the "Perchtenlauf" is to scare the winter away and drive it out of the counter.

Going hand-in-hand with the "Perchtenlauf" is the custom of cracking the whip in which young boys crack whips, often a meter in length, in the air and thus symbolically attempt to whip the winter away. The procession of masked figures halts in the main square of the village and all begin to dance wildly, making even more noise than before. The people of the village watch the dancing, laughing and enjoying themselves. The masked figures are teased and take revenge by chasing the young girls who, in turn, are defended by young men. "Perchten" dances of Imst and Thaur in Tyrol are particularly famous for their brightly colored old masks. The "Perchtenlauf" goes back to pre-Christian times and was originally a heathen custom for driving out the winter.

EASTER CONNECTED WITH MANY FOLK CUSTOMS. During Holy Week, the purely ecclesiastical ceremonies are accompanied by simultaneous observance of old pagan customs. In some areas, young boys run through the village streets shaking noisy rattles. This is a survival of the belief that the evil spirits of winter can be chased away by noise. On Maundy Thursday it is customary to eat green vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce, sorrel leaves or else vegetable soup in order to stay youthful and healthy throughout the year — another tradition which has come down to our times from pagan spring festivals. The ceremony of the Resurrec-

tion is generally observed on the afternoon of Holy Saturday, in accordance with the ceremonial rites of the Catholic Church. The custom of lighting bonfires is still widespread. The day before Easter Eve, large stacks of wood are lighted and in some regions burning wheels are rolled down the mountains. Huge wooden crosses, almost as tall as church steeples, are erected throughout the countryside and pots containing burning pitch are hung from their beams. Another



Perchten Masks of Imst, Tyrol

popular custom is the Easter Sunday stroll and the search by the children for the colored eggs "hidden by the Easter bunny."

On Tuesday of Holy Week, many regions still observe the Easter custom of horseback riding, when farmers and young boys gather with their horses in front of churches and chapels. The horses are all lovingly scrubbed and curried with their manes and tails decorated with ribbons of many colors. The mounted procession leaves the chapel, rides around the planted fields and then returns to the church. The purpose of this ride is to make the fields fruitful. Easter meals, with their traditional special dishes, differ from region to region but they generally include Easter bread, smoked ham, a roast goose and colorfully painted eggs as well as sugar and pastry in the shape of Easter bunnies and hens.

During the season, peasant plays, usually passion plays depicting the sufferings of Christ are often given. Several places in Austria, like Kufstein in the Tyrol, are famous for their peasant-acted passion plays.

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MAY FIRST CELEBRATED AS A LABOR DAY AND SYMBOL OF REAWAKENING NATURE. Present-day Austria has no national legal holidays, such as commemorations of the founding of the Republic, birthdays of Presidents, etc. The only non-religious holiday established by law is May 1, which is celebrated by all political parties as a day in honor of labor. On this day the Socialists hold parades while the conservative parties hold indoor meetings at which appropriate speeches are delivered.

The rural population still regards May First as a day symbolizing the reawakening of nature and celebrates it in accordance with time-honored folk customs. The most widespread of these practices is the erection of a Maypole in the village square, where it serves as a symbol of life and the blessings of nature. A particularly tall and slender fir or spruce tree is chosen for this purpose and two tree trunks are occasionally combined to increase the height of the pole, which sometimes reaches a height of 100 feet. The branches and most of the bark are removed from the trunk, although a few rings of bark are cut out in a decorative pattern. Only the top of the Maypole is left intact. The tree top is decorated with brightly colored ribbons and flowers and sometimes with sausages, hams and bottles of wine. On May First the youth of the village gather around the Maypole for folk dancing. After this the young boys attempt to climb the smooth pole and each time one of them is successful he is allowed to take one of the presents attached to the top of the pole. The boy who climbs the pole in the shortest time also gets a special prize and is acclaimed the hero of the day.

WHITSUNTIDE ALSO HAS MANY FOLK TRADITIONS. In addition to the usual Church ceremonies, Whitsuntide is celebrated in most regions of Austria with many local traditions, such as the Pentecost Fire and the Whitsuntide plays, the most famous and probably the most colorful of which is the "Gailtaler Kufenstechen." According to custom, a group of musicians starts a procession in Freistritz, in Carinthia's Gail Valley, shortly after the noonday meal on Whitsunday. The musicians are followed by large, unsaddled horses mounted by riders each carrying a short, shining spear in his right hand. A cask or barrel is impaled on a stake. At the sound of a flourish of trumpets, the riders set off at a trot and cover the entire length of the course. Then, riding at a lively gallop, they race past the barrel coming as close to it as possible, each rider attempting to strike the cask with his spear. The jousting is repeated over and over again until the stakes break and the barrel collapses. The winner receives a wreath fashioned by the girls of the village.

CORPUS CHRISTI CELEBRATED ON LAND AND WATER.

Corpus Christi is one of the most beautiful folk festivals in Austria. In the villages, the houses are colorfully decorated for the occasion. The main event of the day is the Church procession, in which the entire community participates: clubs and societies, each with their own banners, school children, the fire brigade and veterans with their brass bands. The girls wear garlands and children strew flowers along the way.

The lake processions on the Traunsee and Halstaettersee are especially colorful. The proceedings take place on large barges: the bands are seated on platforms on the barges and even Mass is celebrated at a water-borne altar. The boats, decorated with flowers and wreaths, proceed to the middle of the lake while the passengers sing religious songs and old folk tunes.

VIENNA'S "BATTLE OF FLOWERS." Every summer the Austrian capital holds a big flower festival which culminates in a "Battle of Flowers" in the Prater. Hundreds of floats are artistically decorated with flowers, frequently to symbolize some aspect of Austrian history, culture or music or to represent some modern form of ornamentation. The people of Vienna actively participate in this event and it is customary to dress up in one's most attractive clothes and hats, as in the case of the Easter parades in the U.S. Prominent actors and film stars ride on these flower-bedecked floats and are cheered by the crowds. The floats sometimes represent complete scenes from Austrian operettas and ballets, reconstructed from the great events of the period of Johann Strauss and Josef Lanner. The parade is reviewed by members of the Government, directors of cultural organizations and the officials in charge of theaters, opera houses, dance schools and other artistic institutions. Similar "Battles of Flowers"



Corpus Christi Celebration of Lake Hallstätt

are held in other Austrian cities, e.g. Linz, Salzburg and Innsbruck. Particularly famous is the one held on the Traunsee where, instead of floats, large barges and boats are decorated with flowers.

HARVEST AND GRAPE-GATHERING FESTIVALS WITH FOLKLORE TRADITIONS.

Harvest and grape-gathering festivals are an established part of Austrian folklore. None of these has a fixed date, as in the case with the American Thanksgiving holiday. The differences in climate between the mountains and valleys in Austria means that there are different harvest periods. Consequently, every community has its own harvest or wine festival immediately after the crop has been gathered and stored. Big garlands or crowns are woven from the sheaves and decorated with flowers or — in the case of the wine festival — hundreds of bunches of grapes are tied together to form a huge grape. The farm hands put on their finery, usually ancient folk costumes, the horses and cattle are decorated with ribbons, garlands and flowers and the whole procession marches through the village to the accompaniment of a band and singing old folk songs. It usually stops in front of the church, where the harvest crown or the gigantic symbolic grape is blessed and the people give thanks for the successful harvest by saying a prayer. The harvest crown, the grapes or garlands are then placed in front of the houses of the peasants and wine-growers; and the following night is spent singing and playing. Harvest processions usually afford a colorful picture of old Austrian folk customs, folk dances and folk songs.

ALL SOULS' DAY IN AUSTRIA. All Souls' Day, celebrated throughout Austria on November 2, is a day of solemnity on which the dead are commemorated. As elsewhere, it is cus-



Thanksgiving Celebration in Burgenland, Austria

tomary to decorate graves with flowers and to place lamps on tombstones. In the evening, thousands of little candles and oil-lamps may be seen burning all over the cemeteries. In some regions the custom, going back to pre-Christian times, of pouring wine and strewing crumbs on graves is still observed. In some houses, bread and wine is placed on the table in memory of the dead.

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